

DETAILED ACTION

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Gary Jacobs on 19 May 2008.

The application has been amended as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) An image taking apparatus comprising:

 a light splitting unit which splits a light flux from an image-taking lens into a plurality of light fluxes;

 a view finder optical system configured and positioned to observe an object image formed by the light flux from the image-taking lens;

 an image pickup element which photoelectrically converts the object image to an electrical signal; and

 a focus detection unit configured and positioned to detect the focusing state of the image-taking lens according to a phase difference detection system,

 wherein the light splitting unit changes its state among a first state in which the light flux is directed to the view finder optical system and the focus detection unit, a second state in which the light flux is directed to the image

pickup element and the focus detection unit and a third state in which the light flux is directed only to the image pickup element,

wherein the light splitting unit has a half mirror and a reflection mirror which prevents an incident light flux from passing through the reflection mirror

wherein in the first state, the half mirror and the reflection mirror are positioned in an image-taking optical path so that part of the light flux is reflected by the half mirror and directed to the view finder optical system, and the rest of the light flux a) passes through the half mirror, b) is reflected by the reflection mirror, and c) is directed to the focus detection unit, and

wherein in the second state, the reflection mirror is withdrawn from the image-taking optical path and the orientation of the reflecting surface of the half mirror is changed in the image-taking optical path with respect to the first state so that part of the light flux is reflected by the half mirror and directed to the focus detection unit, and the rest of the light flux passes through the half mirror and is directed to the image pickup element, and

wherein in the third state, the half mirror and the reflection mirror are withdrawn from the image-taking optical path so that the light flux is directed only to the image pickup element

Allowable Subject Matter

2. Claims 1 - 7 and 9 - 12 allowed.
3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

As to independent claim 1, the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest an image taking apparatus comprising: a light splitting unit which splits a light flux from an image-taking lens into a plurality of light fluxes; a view finder optical system configured and positioned to observe an object image formed by the light flux from the image-taking lens; an image pickup element which photoelectrically converts the object image to an electrical signal; and a focus detection unit configured and positioned to detect the focusing state of the image-taking lens according to a phase difference detection system, wherein the light splitting unit changes its state among a first state in which the light flux is directed to the view finder optical system and the focus detection unit, a second state in which the light flux is directed to the image pickup element and the focus detection unit and a third state in which the light flux is directed only to the image pickup element, wherein the light splitting unit has a half mirror and a reflection mirror which prevents an incident light flux from passing through the reflection mirror wherein in the first state, the half mirror and the reflection mirror are positioned in an image-taking optical path so that part of the light flux is reflected by the half mirror and directed to the view finder optical system, and the rest of the light flux passes through the half mirror, which is reflected by the reflection mirror and directed to the focus detection unit, and wherein in the second state, the reflection mirror is withdrawn from the image-taking optical path and the orientation of the reflecting surface of the half mirror is changed in the image-taking optical path with respect to the first state so that part of the light flux is reflected by the half mirror and directed to the focus detection unit, and the rest of the light flux passes through the half mirror and is directed to the image pickup

element, and wherein in the third state, the half mirror and the reflection mirror are withdrawn from the image-taking optical path so that the light flux is directed only to the image pickup element

As to claims 2 – 7, 9 – 12, these claims are dependent upon allowable claim 1 and are thus also considered allowable over the prior art.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to CHRISTOPHER K. PETERSON whose telephone number is (571)270-1704. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 6:30 - 4:00 EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, NgocYen Vu can be reached on 571-272-7320. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

CKP
20 May 2008

*/Ngoc-Yen T. VU/
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